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FM AMCONSUL PESHAWAR
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7790
INFO RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD IMMEDIATE 4575
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI IMMEDIATE 1728
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE IMMEDIATE 1721
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI IMMEDIATE 0995
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL IMMEDIATE 1361
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA IMMEDIATE 0616
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE 0757
RUEHTC/AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE IMMEDIATE 0664
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA IMMEDIATE 0709
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHMFISS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL
RHMFISS/CDR USSOCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUMICEA/USSOCOM INTEL OPS CEN MACDILL AFB FL
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR 4847

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PESHAWAR 000003

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [MOPS](#) [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PK](#)
SUBJECT: SECTARIAN VIOLENCE INCREASES IN PAKISTAN'S NORTHWEST IN RUN
UP TO MUHARRAM

REF: A. PESHAWAR 527 B. PESHAWAR 535

CLASSIFIED BY: Michael A. Via, Acting Principal Officer,
Peshawar, Department of State.
REASON: 1.4 (a), (b), (d)
Summary
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¶1. (C) Pakistan's northwest has been hit with a string of attacks targeting Shi'a Muslims in the November and December run up to Muharram, (January 7-8), the Shi'a holiday mourning the martyrdom of Imam Hussain Ali. Militants have launched suicide bomb attacks on Shi'a processions in Peshawar for the last two consecutive years during the commemoration. Due to police shortages, Peshawar and the surrounding area is likely to remain vulnerable to similar attacks during this years Muharram. End Summary.

A String of Recent Attacks Against Shi'as
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¶2. (C) Aside from the eighteen month sectarian battle in Kurram Agency between the Shi'a Turis and Sunni Bangash tribes, which killed almost 1,000 people before an October truce, militants in Pakistan's northwest have launched a string of attacks against Shi'a Muslims in November and December this year:

-- November 24: Five kg of dynamite were planted at Hashtnagri Bazaar in Peshawar, killing eight people when it exploded at a Shi'a Imam Bargah. (Note. Imam Bargahs are places of worship, social gathering and religious education for Shi'a Muslims. End note.) As typical with many Imam Bargahs in the city, the ground floor of the building was used as a worship center with the upper floor serving as the caretaker's residence.

-- December 5: A car bomb killed 37 when it exploded at Qissa Khwani bazaar in Peshawar's Old City, near the city's main Imam Bargah, which also contained an assembly hall and a hotel for visiting Shi'as. The Turi Association from the predominantly Shi'a tribe, built and managed the Pak Hotel complex, located at the bombing site. The Imam Bargah served as the spiritual headquarters of Turis living in Peshawar. Most of those killed and injured were congregants from the predominantly Shi'a area of Parachinar in Kurram Agency. Many Shi'a exiles have sought

sanctuary in Peshawar from the sectarian violence in Kurram. Despite an October peace deal between warring Shi'a Turis and Sunni Bangash, many have not yet returned to Kurram.

-- December 5: A suicide bomber killed 10 and injured 30 when he drove his explosive-laden car through the barrier of a check post at a jirga of Shi'a tribesmen in Orakzai Agency. (Note. After Kurram, with a 58 percent Shi'a population, Orakzai has the second largest Shi'a population in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), with almost 10 percent. End note.)

-- December 6: Militants beheaded a Shi'a college principal, a prominent Turi (Shi'a) community leader, after kidnapping him the previous week, in Khyber Agency.

Militants Have Attacked Shi'as During Muharram

13. (C) Muharram (January 7-8) is an important Shi'a Muslim holiday mourning the martyrdom of Imam Hussain Ali. During Ashura (January 7-8 this year), Shi'a Muslims traditionally parade through the streets flagellating themselves in this commemoration. Militants have launched suicide bombings attacking Shi'a processions in Peshawar for the last two consecutive years during the Muharram commemoration.

-- January 17, 2008: During Muharram, a suicide bomber blew himself up inside an Imam Bargah near Qissa Khwani bazaar in Peshawar's Old City, killing nine and injuring 25 others. Eyewitnesses said an 18-year-old man in black dress sprayed bullets into the congregants before blowing himself up.

-- January 27, 2008: During Muharram, a suicide bomber blew himself up near Qissa Khwani bazaar in front of a police contingent working to protect a Shi'a procession, killing

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Peshawar's Chief Capital City Police Officer, Malik Muhammad Saad Khan, along with 15 others.

Lack of Police Protection

14. (C) The risk of sectarian violence during the run up to Muharram is high. The FATA Secretary for Law and Order, Ghulam Qadir, told acting Principal officer on December 30 that militants would likely attack Hangu, Orakzai Agency, during the Muharram holiday. The Frontier Corps does not appear to have sufficient forces in the Peshawar area to significantly assist the police, and Pakistani military sources assess local law enforcement as unable to counter or stop these attacks. These local law enforcement limitations and the Muharram holidays place the Peshawar region in a particularly vulnerable position. In the past year, as both Sunni and Shi'a tribes engaged the protective services of militants, the level of violence has increased and spread, often beyond the control to contain it. VIA